

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS
(Section of the Library Association)

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(Leeds City Libraries)

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Contents

ANNOUNCEMENTS	Page 142
"RECOMMENDED BOOKS "	Page 144
COUNCIL NOTES	Page 145
THE COUNTY SCENE	Page 146
THE PERSONAL ASPECT OF RURAL LIBRARY WORK	Page 148
OUR LIBRARY	Page 151
VALUATIONS	Page 155
STUDENTS' PROBLEMS : IX	Page 158
CORRESPONDENCE	Page 162
THE DIVISIONS	Page 164
NEW MEMBERS.	Page 167

The Library Assistant

Announcements

BY the time these words are in print, the Forty-second Annual Meeting at Leicester will be but a memory. Unfortunately we go to press too early for a report to be included in this issue, but we hope to publish some impressions next month, which we are confident will record both a successful gathering of our scattered membership, and a hospitality on the part of our hosts, outmatched by none of the warm welcomes we have received year after year throughout the country.

Though our own Annual Meeting is over, that of the L.A., and the Conference of which it is part, have yet to come, and we hope that they will be attended by a large number of our members, especially from London, and the South generally. Portsmouth promises to be a most attractive meeting-place, and should have a specially warm welcome for members of this Section, since Mr. Sargeant, the City Librarian, was at one time Secretary of our Midland Division, whilst Mr. Carver, his Deputy, is, of course, our President-elect. The Section's own meeting, to be held at 2.15 p.m. on Wednesday, 15th June, in the Guildhall, Portsmouth, will give our readers an opportunity of listening to our "Speculations on libraries in a changing society"—which we hope will prove less bombastic than the title! (We hasten to add, for the benefit of those who like not this prospect, that there are a number of alternative meetings.) As in former years, members attending for one day only will not be required to pay the Conference fee of 5s.

As readers will have gathered from the contents-page, this number is largely devoted to County Library affairs, an aspect of our work which has not received attention in our pages for some time. We hope this issue will atone for that neglect, though in self-defence we must point out that it is really due to the extraordinary professional silence of county assistants, on which Miss Carnell remarks in "The County scene," a feature which will resume a regular place in our pages if county assistants will become vocal, and air their grievances or send their comments to Miss Carnell, County Library, Morecambe and Heysham, Lancs. We need hardly add that articles on aspects of county library work, as of any branch of library work, will be welcomed by us, and always receive serious consideration.

The Library Assistant

As will be seen from "Valuations" in this number, Mr. Holliday has been obliged by pressure of other work to resign the conduct of this ever-popular feature. Though we accept his decision with regret, we are pleased to be able to say that he hopes still to make occasional contributions, so that we are not to lose altogether a pen that has well maintained the traditions of "Valuations," no easy task, as we can witness from personal knowledge. "Valuations" will henceforth be in the hands of Mr. R. W. L. Collison, who will prove, we feel sure, a worthy successor.

BIRMINGHAM AND DISTRICT BRANCH

The Committee of the Branch are hoping to establish Tutorial Classes next winter to prepare candidates for the various sections of the Library Association Examinations. The Classes will take the form of lectures and demonstrations in various branches of librarianship. It is possible that the syllabus of subjects will be as follows:

Elementary :

1. Elementary classification, cataloguing, accession methods, and library administration.
2. Elementary English literary history.

Intermediate :

1. Classification.
2. Cataloguing.

Final :

1. Advanced English literary history.
2. Bibliography and book selection.
3. Advanced library administration.

It may be necessary to modify the above order of subjects, but full particulars will be issued later.

The Classes will be under the auspices of the Birmingham Education Authority and fees will be charged in accordance with the usual rates for commercial and technical subjects, which vary from about 12s. 6d. to 21s. a course. It may be possible to arrange for grants in aid of travelling expenses for students residing at long distances from Birmingham.

Classes will be held in the mornings, as it is thought that these times would be convenient for the majority of students.

The Library Assistant

Courses will commence in September 1938 and run to March 1939, as to prepare students for the May 1939 Examinations.

Classes will be held at the Central Technical College and the Central Public Libraries, Birmingham, and will be open to all students within the area of the Branch.

Further particulars as to dates and times of Classes, names of Tutors, and other details, will be announced later.

“Recommended books”

WITH this issue of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT is enclosed the first issue of the new *Recommended books*. It is issued as a supplement to enable us to give the widest publicity to this new co-operative bulletin, designed to serve the needs of all but the smallest libraries. *Recommended books* will review between thirty and fifty books monthly, and in addition contain book articles and book lists of interest to the library user. Two experimental issues are planned, for June and July, and if sufficient support is received, the bulletin will be established on a permanent basis after the “dead” summer publishing period, beginning on 1st October.

The cost to libraries has been fixed for the present at £3 10s. per 1,000 copies, and the Association has no objection to the resale of the bulletin to readers if it is so desired. Less than 1,000 copies can be supplied at approximately *pro rata* prices. This price is based on circulation, and it is hoped progressively to reduce it as circulation increases.

The bulletin will not, after this issue, be circulated with THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT, but, once it is permanently established, it will be possible to arrange subscriptions for single copies at a small charge, and it is hoped that the bulletin will thus be found useful as a book-selection guide.

The Editor would be pleased to have the names of any members with special knowledge of any subject who would like to take part in the annotating work, and he would be glad also to receive ideas for book articles, book lists, and other general material for inclusion in the bulletin.

All enquiries regarding *Recommended books* should be addressed to the Hon. Editor, Frank M. Gardner, Kensal Rise Public Library, Bathurst Gardens, London, N.W.10.

The Library Assistant

Council Notes

At its meeting on Wednesday, 4th May, the Council was honoured by the presence of the President of the Library Association, who attended by invitation of Mr. Hewitt, our own President. Prior to the meeting, members of the Council had had the pleasure of entertaining Mr. Sayers to tea.

Mr. Hewitt reported briefly on the successful conclusion of the recent disagreement with the L.A., and it was unanimously agreed that the statement on the matter, published in the May number of the journal, be approved.

The Press and Publications Committee reported the reprinting of *A Primer of book classification*. (It is now available from Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24, price 2s. 6d. (2s. to members), post free. Cash with order, please !)

The Education Committee reported on the results of the courses for the December, 1937, L.A. Examinations as follows :

Section	Percentage of Passes	
	L.A. Examinees	A.A.L. Students
Elementary	52.44	61.66
Intermediate, Part I . .	29.02	28.20
" " 2	57.14	63.41
Final, Part I	73.53	75.00
" " 2	56.66	73.33
" " 3	51.61	55.55

New purchases for the library were reported, and Mr. Sayers very kindly offered to present a copy of the new edition of his *Introduction to classification*, an offer which was gratefully accepted. It was decided to remit the question of Messrs. Foyles' book hire-purchase scheme being adopted to the L.A. for their information and comment.

On a motion from the Yorkshire Division, the Council decided that, in future, voting-papers should be despatched individually. A similar motion regarding the journal was withdrawn.

The Library Assistant

The County Scene

E. J. CARNELL

COUNTY assistants are amongst the dimmer lights of a well-populated professional firmament. The personnel of the county service is more mixed than that of the municipal service. It is younger, it is worse paid, it is more liberally besprinkled with diplomas and degrees.

From such a combination of circumstances one would expect an active, constructive, vociferous body to emerge. Actually nothing has emerged. Professionally county assistants are extraordinarily silent. Is it the silence of contentment, resignation, or despair? Or is it merely the lack of somebody to talk to?

Isolation is a chronic danger to county library staffs, and one which is most deadly when least consciously felt. A sense of corporate life amounting almost to genius is necessary to sustain the branch librarian stranded with one or two juniors many miles from headquarters or any other library. And if this is true of the branch librarian, how much worse is the position of the juniors who have no background of professional contacts made in the past. Some sense of fellowship in a great service is essential if we are to maintain any zest for the job in which, through whatever circumstances, we find ourselves. Without zest, we perish.

County library staffs are not brought into daily contact with each other by their work, and in many counties members of the staff do not know all their colleagues even by sight and name. In all counties some effort should be made to bring about social contact, and in large counties it is advisable to form an association for this purpose. No elaborate organization is necessary. In Lancashire, where a Staff Guild has been operating successfully for a year, the officers are limited to Chairman, Secretary, and Editor, and there is no committee, each meeting of the Guild deciding the programme and place of the next. Meetings are held three times a year and a Staff Bulletin is published between each meeting. The meetings are partly social, partly "professional and/or intellectual." Whatever arrangements are made it is important that all members should have equal opportunities of participating in meetings of a staff association. But what of wider contacts?

The County Libraries Section of the Library Association is in-

The Library Assistant

effective as a means of social intercourse. Its meetings can be attended only by the very few who go to the Annual Conference, and it attempts no other regular communication with members other than the minutes of the last meeting and a ballot paper for the Committee. This is not a complaint, but a statement of fact for which no remedy suggests itself. If anybody can think of any way in which the Section can be made more a County Libraries Section and less a County Librarians' Section, it would be a public service to bring it before the Committee of the Section.

Distance, time, and expense will always prevent meetings being a sufficient source of stimulus for the majority of assistants. The professional journals are an obvious substitute. Do county assistants use them as they might for the interchange of ideas, grievances, hopes, and doubts? There is, for instance, no reason why this series of articles should not be a corporate effort instead of an isolated bleating in the unresponsive wilderness.

There must be some topic in the world which will spur county assistants to the strenuous effort of saying what they think about it. Ourselves and our futures may be more provocative of comment than high matters of policy. What do *you* think about the training, prospects, salaries, and status of county library work? However random, laconic, or blasphemous your ideas, please jot them down and send them to me (address, County Library, Morecambe and Heysham, Lancs.) for use, with or without your name as you wish, in these pages. Notes from juniors will be especially welcome.

What, for instance, has been your own experience and what are your comments on such matters as these:

Applying for jobs is an almost universal activity in county libraries. That people should want to move on, and if possible up, is wholly laudable. But is not the motive, in some instances, primarily a desire to get out? Do some people find county library work inherently less interesting than other species of library work, and, if so, why? Or is the cause of restlessness poor prospects for the future?

Frankly, prospects in county libraries for those blessed or cursed with ambition are bad. County librarianships are so rare that the chance of any individual person obtaining one is infinitesimal. The number of deputyships in existence is ludicrously small. There is an appalling dearth of posts of any kind, at headquarters or branches, with salaries of more than £250 p.a. Without subscribing to the impractical and unsound theory that every junior should be on a scale with a maximum of £300, there is,

The Library Assistant

it is suggested, something wrong with a service which does not offer a reasonable chance of a moderately remunerative career to those with the energy and ability to qualify for responsible posts.

There is in county libraries no prejudice against municipal training. Quite recently a county librarianship was given to a municipal assistant in preference to applications from experienced and qualified county assistants. Is any case known of a municipal chiefship falling to the lot of a county assistant?

Can an assistant in a county branch, or the headquarters of the lesser counties, acquire a sufficiently wide working knowledge of books? Ought not all county juniors to move within three or four years of their start in the profession? Do they find it difficult to do so?



The Personal Aspect of Rural Library Work

S. J. MARKS

THESE remarks contain no new information on the subject, but form a tentative approach from a new angle. Taking up rural library work for the first time the writer realized that he had, hitherto, no idea of the possibilities of such work, having shared the view held by all municipal library workers that as rural residents had not the personal use of a comprehensive library, they could not be so well provided for as readers living in a town. He is now of the opinion that it would be just as untrue to say that a person living five miles from the waterworks does not get such good water as one who fills a bucket from the reservoir.

County librarians are now seldom regarded as persons who spend their time packing assorted publishers' remainders into boxes and despatching them to rural centres in the hope that each group of readers will find something of interest in its particular collection. It is generally realized that steps are taken to ensure that each supply shall be of the utmost usefulness to the readers for whom it is intended. Carefully collected details are compiled, showing the requirements of each locality, based on a study of previous issues and on the recommendations of the local librarian and individuals in the area. Naturally there is a certain amount of experiment, but numbers being necessarily limited, collections are largely made up in accordance with the demand which is known to exist.

The Library Assistant

In ascertaining this demand, it is scarcely practicable to obtain from each individual in each area a detailed statement of his requirements. The work involved would be enormous and in any case experiments have shown that questionnaires have little effect. Most of the information required can only be obtained with the co-operation of the local librarian. If this co-operation is wanting it is usually because of bad organization.

Every village has flourishing local societies, which create more work for the persons in charge than does a county library centre. The foundation of such societies, however, is usually preceded by much publicity culminating in local meetings at which the officers are appointed. These officers start off with the knowledge that the success of the venture depends largely upon them and with the feeling that the members look to them as leaders. When county libraries were started local opinion was not consulted in the choice of local librarians, and villages did not feel as they should have done that their libraries were sponsored by themselves, while the librarians regarded themselves as the library's representatives in the village rather than the village's representatives in the library.

In many cases these difficulties have been overcome, but the progress of each centre should be regularly examined, and if a change of local librarian seems necessary, a fresh start should be made in such a way as to ensure local interest.

In most cases the school teacher is the obvious choice for the position, but every centre should be under the charge of somebody who is known personally to everybody else in the district and who is interested, whether by desire or necessity, in most local activities. Nothing better could be wanted, as such a person, meeting his readers frequently in a social capacity, is more approachable than an official known personally to few readers, other than his official contacts.

Most municipal librarians must agree that only the more forceful of their readers obtain the best possible service from their lending libraries, and most county librarians must agree that such a service is difficult to give. Where the municipal library is weakest is in its relations with the large proportion of readers who never make use of the cultural facilities available, and never read anything but the lightest of fiction. True there is always a chance that the chronic novel-reader, hunting or carrying home his prey, may see a non-fiction book which quickens his interest, but he seldom inspects the shelves containing such books; for him they are part of the furniture, or at best, the preserves of the student.

The Library Assistant

Shelf guides, enquiry assistants, special displays, and lists of additions, however valuable, cannot awaken the urge for informative reading; their usefulness is limited to those who have definite wants, even although, without the aids mentioned, they would never become acquainted with those wants. The taste of a reader for whom a library consists of an oasis of trash in a desert of "books" can only be improved through constant and friendly contact with somebody who knows the possibilities of reading and is actively interested in the provision of reading matter for others. A good local librarian in a county system is such a person. To describe him as knowing the possibilities of reading does not imply that he should have extensive bibliographical knowledge and should have had a thorough grounding in library science. It merely means that he shall be a person of fairly extensive reading who knows that the county library will supply books of any type or on any subject. His work is informal, and efficiency in the sense that he fulfils his duties to a strict pattern is particularly to be avoided.

After all this attention has been paid to the importance of the local librarian, it is in the nature of a paradox to point out that the aim should be to make him of less importance in the library service. That is to say that while every effort should be made to improve the service through the centres, at the same time a direct service should be developed. The centres are not intended for the supply of books of a specialized kind—they are for the distribution of the bulk of the local reading matter, but it is obvious that a person wanting a particular book has small chance of finding it in his local centre.

His request is transmitted to headquarters and if it is urgent the book is sent to him directly—if it is not urgent, it is included in the next supply sent to his local centre. This delay in fulfilling a request (even though not urgent) may seem serious at first sight, but if a person wants to read *The Forsyte saga* does it really matter if he does so straight away or after a month or two? In any case the tempo of country life is much slower than in the town, and the countryman, whose whole life is ordered by the seasons, is prepared to wait for a book just as he is prepared to wait for his apples to ripen. If he wants the book quickly he can send for it, just as if he feels in need of fruit out of season he can buy it.

Books required immediately, fall into two main categories: those which are in popular demand and those of a serious nature required for study. The former are issued on condition that the reader returns them within

The Library Assistant

a specified period. The latter are best issued with no time limit, on the understanding that they are to be returned to the reader's local centre, from which they can be collected at the next exchange. If they are wanted in the intervening period, a notice can be sent asking for their return. The loan of these latter books costs the reader nothing in carriage, but in the former case he is normally required to pay postage one way. It is obvious that the cost incurred greatly restricts the use made of postal loans, while the policy of the county library should be to encourage them, by paying carriage both ways. Rising expenditure on carriage should be regarded as desirable, not merely inevitable. Owing to the large amount of voluntary work involved, a county service, however high its standards, cannot spend an overwhelming proportion of its income on administration, no branch of which is more important than the personal service to readers. There can surely be little doubt that the ideal service will cost the reader nothing apart from his rates.

Our Library

County libraries : retrospect and forecast, by E. J. Carnell. 1938. Grafton, 10s. 6d.

IN his introduction to Miss Carnell's recently published book on county libraries, Mr. J. D. Cowley suggests that all librarians, both county and municipal, should read it; it would make them think. The advice is good, for Miss Carnell has written a thoroughly refreshing book, vivid, stimulating, and outspoken. She has not hesitated to put on paper many of the things which progressive county librarians and county library assistants have—with accompaniment by Mr. O'Leary—been saying privately for some time. She has no respect for established tradition, and little hesitation in giving chapter and verse for her criticisms. By this is not implied that she is a "bright young thing" gaily tilting at her elders, for nothing could be farther from the truth; although not free from faults and omissions, her work is sober and carefully considered, her judgments thoroughly sound.

The book is a revision of a thesis which was accepted for the Honours Diploma in 1936. Although the revision has been fairly drastic, and material has been included to bring the work up-to-date to the end of last year, there are evidences that it was originally prepared some time ago. Many of the statistics and other facts quoted in support of certain

The Library Assistant

arguments relate to the early nineteen-thirties and previously. At the same time, this fault is not altogether Miss Carnell's, for since the cessation of the full-dress annual reports on County Libraries, there has been a serious paucity of published information on modern practice and progress—a position aggravated by the somewhat abstract flavour of recent papers at the Annual Conference.

History, Machinery, and A New deal are the three parts into which this work is divided. In the first section, which is a carefully critical consideration of the historical background, and not merely the usual colourless coupling of dates with facts and figures, there is an attempt to demonstrate the causes of many of our present problems and evils. The policy of the Carnegie Trustees in their initial experiments is examined in a critical light, although there is a full appreciation of the difficulties and lack of data inevitable in the early days of the movement. A consideration of the origins and legal validity of differential rating is of unusual interest, especially at a time when progressive counties are abandoning the principle as quickly as possible, and at least one county which has done so now regrets it. Miss Carnell claims quite simply that there is nothing in the 1919 Act which authorizes or even envisages the differential rate in the form in which we know it to-day. Her arguments may not convince all her readers, and the relevant section of the Act is so vaguely worded as to render improbable any universal agreement on this point, but certainly her interpretation is more logical than that hitherto generally accepted.

This *Historical* section gives an excellent impression of the beginnings and growth of the movement, and of both the enthusiasm and mistakes of the pioneers. It is not complete, however; there is, for example, no mention of the circulating library operated in Herefordshire by Bishop Percival from 1906 (with the aid of a grant from Andrew Carnegie), which was taken over by the county when the County Library was started.

The second and largest portion of the book examines the whole machinery of county library administration. It not only explains the best existing practice, as is usual in text-books, but also exposes the chaotic muddle in which many counties to-day find themselves, and contains valuable suggestions for improved methods of working. No progressive librarian will finish this section without having decided on at least a few minor changes in his own library; other librarians will be well advised not to read it, for they may have difficulty in lulling their consciences again. The point is made early in the book "that it is the ideas, methods, and

The Library Assistant

achievements of the leaders which we read, hear, observe. Mediocrity is silent but rampant." Thus, one is shocked to read that few counties have even to-day location indexes for their non-fiction stock; one cannot help doubting the truth of this suggestion, but if true it is very dreadful. Few will agree with Miss Carnell's implied suggestion that a fiction index is also desirable; at least one county abandoned this feature as being unjustifiably extravagant of time.

In the chapter on *Branches* there is an effective picture of the thoroughly unsatisfactory state of affairs to which differential rating and gross confusion of ideas have led. The 1919 Act clearly intended that county councils should become the library authorities for all those rural and small urban areas which could not afford to maintain independent systems; it may also be argued that there was an intention that those larger urban districts which had not hitherto adopted the Acts should now lose their chance to exercise any powers as library authorities. Certainly the Act envisaged the county council as the authority for that area for which it was adopted, and the outstanding principle of the county library was the efficiency rendered possible by one authority for a comparatively large area. Yet as Miss Carnell clearly shows, many county library authorities have muddled and misconceived themselves to a stage where they have handed over nearly all their own powers to those very authorities whom the Act debarred from acquiring them of their own volition. Well might it be said of many counties, as it is here of Surrey, "where the county seems to exercise no control over the local arrangements, the results obtained do not outshine those of counties which do act as something more than the source of book supply, nor, ironically enough, does the yoke of the county authority seem to be borne any more patiently because it is made light. . . ." Certainly this book removes any excuse for much of the muddled thinking on this section of county library organization, which is distressingly prevalent at the present time.

There is one inexcusable mistake in the chapter on *Distribution*. Middlesex has used specially built book-vans, fitted with racks to take trays each holding approximately fifty books, since 1927; these trays are not carried by hired van, as suggested. An illustration of the original Middlesex van appeared in the County Libraries Report, 1927-28, and the van was on exhibition at the Brighton Conference.

The final section of this work, on *A New deal*, is uneven. The earlier portion is of considerable value, and repays careful study, but the book

The Library Assistant

finishes with a description, in the present tense, of the ideal county library of the future, and this is perhaps its least satisfactory part.

The chapter on *Authority, Government, and Finance* points to the need for fundamental changes, some of which, such as a wholesale revision of library boundaries, are as yet barely in sight. It advocates the complete abolition of differential rating for all purposes except newsrooms, although here Miss Carnell has apparently fallen into the error of assuming that all counties adopted the differential rating principle, for she lists as having abandoned it at least one county which had throughout adhered to a flat rate.

Finally, the last chapter deals with what is termed district development, a phrase which is perhaps not adequately explained. This chapter is particularly important as containing the first references in any text-book to a new tendency towards an intensification of the service to very rural areas. Two counties, Lancashire and Herefordshire, are making experiments on the basis of treating each group of houses, however small, as an area requiring a direct library service. Lancashire has put into operation in the North Lonsdale Area a motor-van which makes a monthly call on such groups of dwellings, and each family may take a sufficient number of books to last until the next call. In Herefordshire there is a scheme by which one person in each such hamlet collects twenty or thirty books from the nearest branch or centre, shares them out among the neighbours, and exchanges the whole collection each two, three, or four weeks.

It is customary to speak of a new text-book as filling a long-felt want. It could hardly be said of this, for the need for such a work had not been felt. But since it is the most frank, refreshing, and realistic work on county libraries which has yet been published, it is entitled to a very prominent place on the librarian's bookshelf. Those municipal librarians who have suspected that all was not well with the county library movement will find their fears confirmed; those county librarians who have known it and wished that something could be done to rectify it, can now hope that Miss Carnell's words will prick some of the laggards into effective action.

The physical make-up is pleasing, with a blue cloth cover, lettered in gold, which, unlike the publications of the Library Association, merges harmoniously into a shelf of books. It is printed with care, if not inspiration, on a satisfactory paper, and there are very few errors overlooked in the proof-reading. One or two mis-quotations have slipped through. There is a good index.

B. O. S.

Valuations

STANLEY HOLLIDAY

THE progress of the County Libraries Section's series of readers' guides gives a feeling of gratification. One assumes, without information, that they are having success—and size for money (a penny a time) they represent good value. Due publicity has been given here to those so far received, and once more attention is called to others which bring the count up to eleven of the promised twenty-four. A batch of seven, published in the seven months from September 1937 to March of this year, has been received. These, in order of publication, are: handicrafts, modern poetry, psychology, engineering, architecture, child study and mothercraft, and mathematics, physics, and chemistry. No apology is needed for displaying the full list of titles. Every item recommended has not been examined, and it would be more than ridiculous for an individual to seek opportunity for appraisal or criticism with such a variety of subjects. To take an example, the list on engineering, issued last December, runs to thirty-two pages, and must include nearly 700 titles. Publisher, price, and date are included with each, and there is a fair sprinkling of American works. The list is broken up under thirty-two subject headings, constituting sub-lists of varying lengths. A few dozen copies of each of these should prove useful baits if distributed among selected persons from a library's clientele.

And now, having paid homage to the great god Bibliography, let me turn to the normal library bulletin—the true food of this article. Newcomers, here at any rate, are St. Albans and Scarborough. *St. Albans'* selection of books has not yet developed beyond two alphabetical lists of general works and fiction books, sparingly annotated, but the booklet contains no advertisements and is of sufficient size to allow eventually of developments. *Scarborough's* "New books" has an attractive outward appearance, but its interior is none too inviting. The type display is not good enough for the up-to-date book-selection. I think we can take it as an axiom that whenever Sans bold and ordinary thin newspaper print are brought together, the result will always be woefully strabismic. On the other hand, *Scarborough* has produced a wholly admirable book list on gardening, nicely balanced, with two or three good black line blocks, and garnished with a few choice quotations. "Gardening" is more redolent of the flower than of the earth: "New books" reeks of the printer's devil.

The Library Assistant

Rugby's "New books" for March was as impeccably austere as ever. Well-written annotations showed considerable appreciation for literature and a capacity for the rapid assimilation and digestion of the contents of books. But alack! eheu!—"an urgent need for economy" has come to Rugby. The printed list has fled, and with the April issue we are back to the duplicator. Fortunately, all the spirit of the printed list lingers in the new and strange foolscap sheets, and I am quite prepared to believe that the quality of Rugby's monthly list will suffer no deterioration. Homespun may hold its own against the former Savile Row appearance.

The tally of book lists proceeds with *Croydon's* "Reader's index," always a useful check for additions, despite a lack of emphasis on technology; with brochures for children from *Watford*, *Hendon*, and *Fulham*, three well-known productions which need no words from me; with standard material from *Burnley*, *Middlesbrough*, and *Halifax*; and a very neatly done booklet of "One hundred and fifty books of the last three years" from *Toronto*. It is flattering to the home country that so many British works should appear therein. Lists from *Bristol* and *Leeds* on the cinema have been ably reviewed in a contemporary, as also has been a select bibliography on chess from *Colchester*. "The Fordwick" from *Brentford* and *Chiswick* has reappeared for review, accompanied by a somewhat subdued "Quarterly record" from *Newcastle Lit. and Phil.* *Rotherham*, *Wrexham*, *Darlington*, and *Hyde* complete the score.

The field is now clear for "Books of 1937" (sound the trumpets) from *Bethnal Green*—"Valuations'" happy event of the year. At first sight it appears that *Bethnal Green's* annotator has at last allowed exuberant skill to outrun discretion; a second glance shows that owing to a slightly different arrangement this year the annotations are shorter than usual, so far as they concern single books. But once again, the production of this annual list and the evaluative criticism it contains are magnificent. The new "Times" monotype was the choice for print, on a good-quality creamy paper; the cover is in solid colour of a rich blue. An airy wit, frothing on the top of a large amount of shrewd insight, has produced the notes. "From Mr. Shaw," observes "Books of 1937," "a text-book on plumbing would be an adventure of the mind." We might counter: "From *Bethnal Green*, an annotation on the Registrar-General's annual return of statistics would be like a mixture of champagne and thermit."

Amidst some miscellaneous material looms (looms is the word) number one of the "DACAAL," which unlovely name is a brevity for the official

156

The Library Assistant

organ of the Devon and Cornwall A.A.L. Within, we learn that this Division, like Aphrodite, was born of the waves, and furthermore, owing to a remarkable misprint (intentional?), that its Hon. Secretary possesses the enviable faculty of making a noise like an unfrocked clergyman. I must inquire further into this. Seriously, however, the intention of the "DACAAL" is excellent, the spirit and standard of the contributions very good. I am glad to see that so new a Division has already chosen to emulate the formidable Midlanders' "Open access."

When libraries summon the mayor to open new branches they often choose the occasion to issue explanatory documents of highly institutional appearance. The lay-out of the brochure describing the opening ceremony of the *North Watford Branch Library* successfully avoided grimness by a judicious use of colour, and a reduction of letterpress to a useful minimum. The result is an attractive pamphlet of becoming brevity. The programme of the opening ceremony of *Ilford's Gantshill Branch Library* is somewhat plainer in appearance, but makes pleasant use of a tinted paper. The opening of the new *Sheepscar Branch Library* at *Leeds* brings an outline of the proceedings austere correct in black and white. As a record, the leaflet would have been improved by an illustration, or at least a plan.

The last of the "miscellanea" to which I make reference is *Altrincham's* duplicated "Service"—an account of the available facilities in the libraries, museum, and art gallery. This is one of a series of such service guides as have appeared at various places recently, and since it is carefully prepared should prove of value to its public. It contains the interesting idea of a half-hour itinerary of the central building, and is provided with a brief index. Guides of this type are quite as necessary to the reading public as the codified duty manual to the staff, but neither are any too common.

For a little more than two years, the present writer has conducted this feature in the ASSISTANT. He has now found it necessary to relinquish the job, which passes to hands already well practised elsewhere. Impressions which the writer has gathered during the past two years point to an amount of progress in the general appearance and contents of library publications. On the whole, the fairly wide acceptance of the Gill Sans type as the most useful for display in small publications of the kind reviewed has resulted in increasingly clean appearance. An easily obtained "cleanliness" by this means should not, however, be used as an excuse for failure to experiment, since it is surely part of a librarian's job to keep well abreast of typographical development. The growth of the "magazine" idea in

The Library Assistant

bulletins has helped to break down much of the formality preserved between the official and the public; as witness the remarkable success of the *Middlesex* "Books for all." Innovations in format have been successful in a few instances, but it is the writer's considered opinion that a voluntary standardization in the outward appearance of library publications would be a practical move. A large parcel of library publications from all over the British Isles and elsewhere is at present a fair imitation of chaos. Voluntary standardization as recommended above would perhaps result in scales of printing costs, varying according to the quality of work required. Standardization without regimentation would appear to be equally desirable in most forms of library practice.



Students' Problems: IX

D. H. HALLIDAY

The School Certificate

IN the March number I passed a personal and fairly extreme opinion about the School Certificate and its efficacy as an entrance qualification for librarianship. I thought the comment rather provocative and had expected quite a storm of protest. Nothing has happened. Now, out of consideration for the aims of balanced statement in this feature, I find myself driven to providing my own opposition, or, at least, to considering and sifting what can gainfully be added to the original mere reference.

Those who hold that the School Certificate is a Good Thing are realists. With no rosy delusions concerning the prestige of librarianship in the eyes of the multitude, they admit the unpleasant truth that nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of a thousand believe that "anyone could do a librarian's job." So modest have been our efforts at self-advertisement that even councillors and members of committees fall within this generalization. Having regard for their well-known benevolence . . . well, need more be said? We arrive at once at a reason for the School Certificate. It is beside the point to argue that an occasional elementary school product is superior in gumption, in common-sense approach to much of our routine work, to many a person who has passed through a secondary school. This can be no argument for opening the doors of the profession to people of a low educational standard. After the efforts of years to build up a standard of entry into library work, such a retrogressive step would be a dire catastrophe.

The Library Assistant

This is a very cogent argument. Its truth depends on whether such a danger is there. Would a test of our own—a more searching and appropriate test than the School Certificate—be viewed with as much respect? It must be admitted as unlikely, mainly because we have not succeeded in inculcating a proper respect for ourselves and our work. Authorities would be less inclined to enforce a Library Association standard than the ready-made one of the School Certificate.

That being so, I am prepared to admit that to *substitute* our test for the School Certificate would be foolhardy. We must wait either for an advance in public recognition of the qualities of librarianship or for a general rebellion against the tyranny and inadequacy of the School Certificate. But that does not alter the contention that a superior test is needed. It makes little difference—except a submergence of principle (*i.e.* that the School Certificate is harmful to youth)—if the test is *additional* to that examination.

Despite my talk of "opposition," I cannot believe that many librarians have much respect for the School Certificate in itself. That is what I wanted to emphasize in my original reference. As a test of the qualities necessary in our work it falls woefully short of our aims. It does not carry as much weight as a testimonial from a truthful head master. Although viewed with exaggerated importance in the educational and commercial spheres, intrinsically its only worth is its face value—that the holder has attended an approved secondary school and there has been taught for so many years certain subjects with a fair degree of success.

The solution does not lie in adopting a higher educational qualification; at least, not at present. The conditions of our work are not good enough to hold a general attraction for the best people in the more select classes where opportunities are brighter and more abundant. Our great need is for some means of improving our recruiting from among those available, of selecting those people who possess, inert, the qualities of the good librarian and who will develop them by training. It cannot be done by interview alone. Few librarians or committees are sufficiently astute judges.

On the other hand, the value and efficiency of scientific tests has been proved by many commercial houses. To-day experts are capable of framing tests which will discover candidates' hidden qualities and possibilities, which the strained circumstances of an interview rarely disclose.

It is at least worth while to experiment with such tests. If successful, they could be adopted officially as an additional entrance qualification,

The Library Assistant

thereby achieving in one stroke a standard of recruitment well out of reach of our present means.

Marking Reflections

The following paragraphs are more than tutors' grumbles. They deal with lapses which recur repeatedly in answers and indicate points which if seriously considered by students would produce a very welcome improvement of standard. Though obvious to the few, they must never occur to the majority, and I again appeal to all tutors for such notes, which can be of great constructive value to the younger student.

A common error in practical cataloguing is the failure to repeat in the index to the classified catalogue the entries listed as necessary for the dictionary catalogue. For instance, a student chose "Gymnastics" as the specific subject heading for a book in the dictionary catalogue but ignored the word entirely in the index to the classified catalogue, preferring "Physical exercises" here instead. This is tantamount to saying that a reader will only think of "Gymnastics" if the catalogue is arranged on the dictionary plan, and that he will think of looking under "Physical exercises" if it is classified.

Young students often make the mistake of considering their own library, or branch, as typical of every library in Great Britain. When discussing general principles, it is necessary to remember that there are great reference libraries, county libraries, large urban systems with a central building and a chain of branches, small town libraries with one building, and so on.

Why are some students so prejudiced? Is it a reflection of the partisan spirit of the age—or is it what Mr. Huxley calls the urge to "reduce diversity to identity"—which causes the lamentable one-sidedness of their answers? Even when a discussion of the pros and cons of a subject is expressly requested, very rarely are both sides of a question considered. Instead, a point of view is stated at the outset (whereas it *should* be a *conclusion*) and the student embarks on a fierce attack, annihilating or dismissing the cogent opposition arguments as prejudices of the flimsiest bases. The most reprehensible feature is a deliberate choice of examples and the unskilful suppression of others which would provide an obstacle of fact; although it is not unusual to find an example cited which on full examination refutes

The Library Assistant

the very argument it is intended to support. To tutors (and probably examiners, too) the results are ludicrous and irritating. Such twisting of facts is not independent thought. It may be the technique of the debating society or the popular press, but it is ill-suited to the problems of librarianship.

Colloquially, "theory" and "practice" are often used as terms of opposite meaning. In a sense, they do evoke a contrast; but that sense does not apply to the study of library science in which theoretical principles are gained from experience of what is sound practice. Particularly is the loose use of the words a snare for classification students. It is fatal to suggest—as many do—that something "works in theory but fails in practice." This amounts to saying that "theoretical" is a term applied to ideas that won't work. Any "theory" which does not work is *false* and must be dismissed as having no part in our theoretical studies. Persons who perpetrate such a statement as the above betray both a mistaken idea of the subject and that they have not understood what they themselves have written.

Another outcome of the same misleading idea is the tendency to divorce theoretical principles from the rest of the subject. I have just marked a couple of questions, the first of which asked, "What are the criteria of a good notation?" and the second required a comparison and evaluation of the notations of several schemes. The first was fairly well answered, but the second found hopeless muddle—no idea of what to use as a basis of comparison. It was not realized that the formulating of criteria in the first question was anything more than a logical exercise. Criteria, principles, rules, etc., are designed for a practical purpose and should be used as a means of *testing*.

Comments on the May Examination Papers

The next number of this feature (in the journal for July) will contain comments on the May L.A. Examination papers by D. E. Coult (Elementary), F. McDonald (Inter. Cataloguing), and W. H. Phillips (Inter. Classification).

The Library Assistant Correspondence

● PADDINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY,
PORCHESTER ROAD,
LONDON, W.2.
7th April, 1938.

THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.
SIR,—

LIBRARY TEXT-BOOKS

I have read with great interest the various letters and the articles based on a paper read by Mr. K. A. L. Roberts which have appeared in THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT during the past month or two. I have, for some considerable time, devoted much thought to the problem of the education of local government staffs, and have arrived at the conclusion that responsibility for adequate training rests jointly upon the officer and the local authority—the former for the sake of his own ambition, the latter for the sake of efficiency. The officer should consider himself under obligation to sit the examinations of the appropriate professional body, and the authority should be prepared (a) to offer sufficient salary so that suitable men and women will be attracted to the service, and (b) to outline suitable courses of study and bear the cost of them.

But the provision of text-books is a special little problem on its own; it involves further principles. In the first place, I regard as untenable an assumption which most of your correspondents have not questioned, viz. that text-books should be supplied, on loan, to all students who intend to sit the L.A. examinations. I think this non-buying all-borrowing principle is indefensible, and is, indeed, a principle as equally short-sighted as the opposite view of the Colonel Blimps who would rather go without a book than suffer the indignity of borrowing from the "free" library. There are certain books which the student will require fairly continuously during two or three years of his study, and these, I submit, the student might reasonably be expected to buy for himself. They are not so numerous as to be beyond the means of most students, and even apart from examinations, they will be of value to him.

To be practical I will list those books which I consider the student will need continuously throughout, say, three years of study for the Elementary and Intermediate examinations (I feel that Mr. Roberts has quoted his figures of necessary text-books with conscious hyperbole for the sake of emphasis; he cannot expect us to take them seriously):

English Literature: Stopford Brooke, Compton-Rickett, Mair, Manly and Rickert.

Cataloguing: Akers, Cataloguing Rules, Mann, Bishop.

Classification: Sayers' Manual and Introduction, Merrill.

The Library Assistant

Administration : Brown's Manual, Small Libraries' Manual, Hewitt, Double-day's Primer.

The total cost of these books, new, is approximately £7. Now this sum can be spread over two or three years, and, even with the cost of correspondence courses added, is not expensive. It is, in any case, far cheaper than merely the charge for a correspondence course in any other profession. The remainder of the books the student will be able to borrow, ideally, either locally or from the specialized libraries, A.A.L., or Greenwood. He needs them only for a comparatively short period, and judicious note-taking would obviate his need for them a second time.

The text-books for the Final Examination would be of a similar cost, but there would be a gain, in so far as some of the books used in the Elementary and Intermediate Examinations would still be valid for the Final.

Now, such a scheme, if widely put into operation, would have very many beneficial results :

1. It would enable both local and special libraries, in the absence of any need to duplicate the library "bibles," to go farther afield and utilize their staff text-book allocation for the supplying of the less easily accessible material.

2. Due to the freeing of funds, many more copies of the "secondary" text-books could be put into circulation, thus giving the student who is taking a correspondence course a good chance of getting the books he wants *at the time he needs them*.

3. The buying of so many books would give the publishing of library text-books a much-needed fillip, and enable some volumes now lying in manuscript to be published ; it might also help to cheapen prices (although I admit that this is not a likely effect).

4. I was very surprised to see in print Mr. Cooper's remark that the text-books have only a "temporary interest." Surely anyone interested in his profession and livelihood will find continual use for them and joy in their possession. But whether interest is maintained or not, two or three years' service would seem to justify buying the books.

5. After a time there will be a considerable number of second-hand text-books in circulation, so easing expense to those coming afterwards.

This system, in common with all others, has its drawbacks, but they are not so strong as to be insurmountable. The primary difficulty is, of course, the finding of the money. Many students will not be in a position to pay out in a lump sum the cost of the text-books which I have enumerated. But facilities being available almost everywhere for easy terms, the difficulty is reduced considerably. Apart from local facilities, the following are worth mention :

- (i) NALGO lends money to members for educational purposes.

- (ii) Messrs. Whiteley's easy payment scheme is by far the least trouble. For 5 per cent. extra, and merely on a parent's signature, they will supply

The Library Assistant

the student with any library text-books and spread the cost over a specified period.

After passing the examination, those students who have no further use for the books will have no difficulty in disposing of them in the second-hand market; and this is where the Association might help. A clearing-house could fairly easily be established through which the vendor could in most cases be reimbursed by from one-half to two-thirds of his original outlay.

An alternative source of supply is a scheme established by Messrs. Foyle, of Charing Cross Road (a scheme which I very recently brought to the notice of the Education Secretary of the A.A.L.). They will supply new text-books at published price and second-hand text-books at two-thirds published price. Provided the books are returned to them within one year, Foyles will return to the student two-thirds of the price he paid for them. If returned after one year, but under two years, they will return one-half; and for periods between two and three years, one-third the purchase price will be repaid.¹

The latter scheme is a very attractive one, but its working is again based on the loan principle, which opposes my convictions. I feel that the scheme of purchase is by far the soundest, and will be the cause of many more assistants becoming a real asset to the profession.

Yours, etc.,
S. H. HORROCKS.

¹ *We understand that Messrs. Foyle will not operate this scheme direct with individuals, but only through official organizations. The A.A. L. Education Committee has the matter under consideration, but no decision has yet been reached. See Council Notes in this issue.*—HON. ED.

The Divisions

DEVON AND CORNWALL

ON 6th April the Division held its second meeting of the year. Thirty members met at the new Torquay Library at 4 p.m. and were kindly conducted over the building by the Borough Librarian, Mr. R. Halliday, A.L.A. After tea, the Division was formally welcomed by Mr. G. W. H. Spanton, J.P., Chairman of the Paignton Urban District Council, and of the Library Committee.

Three papers on Library Publicity were read, the first by Mr. H. R. J. Boulter, A.L.A. (Devon County Branch Librarian, Paignton), on Internal Publicity. He described various methods he used in the Paignton Branch Library, and instanced other ideas he would like to see practised. The main objects of his methods were to give readers the maximum opportunity of "discovering" the wide use to which they could put the library service.

The Library Assistant

and to allow them adequate means of expressing any particular and personal wants they might have. His paper was essentially a "confession of faith," which faith, judging by a later visit to the Paignton Branch Library, he certainly puts into practice!

The second paper, read by Miss M. Singlez, A.L.A. (Plymouth City Library), was concerned with External Publicity. She went to the root of the problem with an attack on the inconsistency of librarians as a body, and declared that a considered programme of publicity could only be successful if based on a nationally adopted set of professional ideals.

Mr. I. W. J. Snook, F.L.A. (Deputy Librarian, Devon County), concluded with a paper concerned chiefly with the psychological reasons which make publicity so necessary. He blamed our educational system for failing to produce citizens who retained a spontaneous interest in the important things of life.

Since this meeting Mr. C. Harris, F.L.A., Chairman of the Division, has resigned this office on appointment as Branch Librarian at Leeds. While his services as Editor of "Dacaal" and Chairman of the Division will be greatly missed, all members of the Division join in wishing him every success in his new post. Miss D. Drake, Librarian of North Devon Athenæum, has taken his place as Chairman of the Division.

The next meeting will be held at Buckfast Abbey on 8th June. Members will be welcomed by the Right Rev. the Lord Abbot (by whose kind permission the meeting has been made possible), and will be addressed by the Rev. Mark Strahl on "The Book in manuscript."

KENT

A meeting was held at the Folkestone Central Library on Wednesday, 27th April, with Alderman J. W. Stainer, J.P., Vice-Chairman of the Folkestone Library Committee, in the chair.

After extending a welcome to the members, to which Mr. W. A. Munford replied, the chairman introduced the speaker, Mr. E. Wisker, who gave a paper on "A Librarian looks at the junior staff." After some witty preliminaries, Mr. Wisker devoted a few minutes to an interesting analysis of the virtues and vices of the junior staff, and then embarked upon an intensely interesting series of digressions relating to the function of the public library, the necessity of a systematic study of national and regional reading habits, censorship, book selection, and other matters of vital interest to the profession.

The subsequent discussion was both stimulating and entertaining.

The Library Assistant

The juniors, undismayed by the implication of their insignificance, defended their good name with considerable skill and wit.

Members then attended a *thé dansant* at the Leas Cliff Hall, by kind invitation of the Corporation, and afterwards were taken to inspect the new Cheriton Branch Library and School Clinics.

NORTH-EASTERN

A meeting of the Division was held at Middlesbrough on Wednesday, 27th April, by kind invitation of Mr. W. Lillie, A.L.A., Borough Librarian. In the afternoon about fifty members assembled in the Central Public Library and, after a few words of welcome by Mr. Lillie, formed themselves into two parties, one to tour the Britannia Steelworks of Messrs. Dorman Long & Co., Ltd., the other to visit the Telephone Exchange.

Those who visited the steelworks were shown every stage in the making of a steel girder, from the scrap metal going into the furnace, and passing through the various refining and rolling processes until finally the finished girder was waiting to be loaded on to a wagon for despatch.

The other party was shown just what happens when a subscriber dials the right or the wrong number, and the complex mechanism brought into operation, from the time a dialling call leaves the calling instrument to the time it reaches the receiver, was described in detail.

Both parties joined again at tea, which was kindly provided by the Middlesbrough Public Libraries and Museums Committee, and the Mayoress (Mrs. W. Turford), who was accompanied by the Mayor (Alderman W. Turford, J.P.) and the Chairman (Coun. J. W. Wright) and other Members of the Committee, welcomed the Division and after describing the work which Middlesbrough was doing throughout its libraries, expressed the hope that the Division would again visit Middlesbrough in the not distant future. The Chairman of the Committee, the Head Postmaster, and the Transport Manager also spoke of their gratification that they were able to help with the arrangements of the meeting, and the Chairman of the Division (Mr. W. M. Martin) proposed a vote of thanks to all who had helped to make the meeting a success, which was carried with acclamation.

After tea, opportunity was taken by the members to look round the Central Library and at 6.30 p.m. the Evening Session began. The first item was a short Business Meeting at which two minor amendments to the Divisional Rules were adopted, and Mr. J. Crawley was elected an Honorary Auditor.

The Library Assistant

The Chairman then called upon Mr. Miles Shepherd, Deputy Librarian, Middlesbrough, to read his paper "'Neither a borrower nor a lender be'—some problems of staff and public." Mr. Shepherd, in a somewhat provocative paper, outlined some of the difficulties which confront the librarian of to-day and described the different ways in which these were being met. Among those who took part in the subsequent discussion were Councillors Wright and Turner, and Messrs. Burgess, Ferry, Lillie, Lindsay, and Martin.

The final event of the evening was the Spelling Bee between the North and South districts of the Division and the teams consisted of Miss Allason, Miss Young, and Messrs. Burgess, Ferry, Hatton, Martin, and Shaw (for the North) and Miss Johnson, Miss Scofield, and Messrs. Barrett, Broomhead, Cardy, Harrison, and Hurren (for the South), with Mr. Shepherd as Spelling Master. The result of the contest was a victory for the North team with the final score, 27 points to 16.

New Members

CENTRAL.—Miss M. M. Beecham, Miss B. Budd (Bristol); Miss M. Eames (Merionethshire); Miss E. M. Ford (Reading); Miss M. K. George (Inst. for Research in Dairying, Shinfield); Miss B. M. Goulding, Miss B. N. Hudson (Bristol); R. V. Keyworth (Huntingdonshire); Miss G. J. Lambden (Reading); Miss D. F. M. Lawrence (Bristol); Miss P. F. Reeves (Reading); J. T. Rowland (Cambridge); Miss E. K. Wilson (West Lothian County).

Devon and Cornwall.—Miss H. Smethurst (Falmouth).

East Midlands.—R. Fowkes (Leicester County); Miss J. Harrup (Long Eaton); Miss J. Lennard (Alfreton); Miss M. Rees (Derby County); C. A. Roberts (Leicester); Miss I. M. Saxton (Long Eaton).

Eastern.—Miss O. E. Burrell, Miss M. M. Taylor, Miss T. E. Rooft, Miss J. M. Willmore, Miss S. M. Kirkby (Norfolk County).

Greater London.—Miss J. M. Cheiza (St. Albans); Miss E. H. Duggan, Miss J. Graham (Finsbury); Miss W. Green (Essex County, Romford); Miss M. Holmes (Hendon); Miss P. E. Hughes (Finchley); Miss P. Joseph (Middlesex County, Ruislip); D. Pam (Edmonton); Miss H. B. Reader (Deptford); E. H. Seagroatt (Dagenham); T. C. Smith (Poplar); Miss J. L. Waller (Finsbury); H. H. G. Walsh (Woolwich); Miss A. J. Westgate (Finchley).

Kent.—Miss D. Bowes-Smith (Kent County, Chislehurst); Miss J. East

The Library Assistant

(Bexley); Miss E. Herron (Kent County, Crayford); Miss B. Lye (Kent County).

Midland.—Miss K. M. Cook (Birmingham); W. A. Cross (Wolverhampton); R. F. Eaton (Burton-on-Trent); Miss W. G. Elvins (Worcester County); Miss J. M. G. Garlick (Birmingham); Miss K. P. Golding (Sutton Coldfield); Miss B. F. Grosvenor (Birmingham); Miss N. J. D. Haynes (Worcester County); Miss M. L. Pedlingham (Sutton Coldfield); Miss D. B. Waite (Gloucester County).

North-Eastern.—Miss E. J. Bailes, Miss E. N. Bewick, Miss D. Irwin (Durham County).

[The rest of this list is unavoidably held over till next month.—H ON. ED.]

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